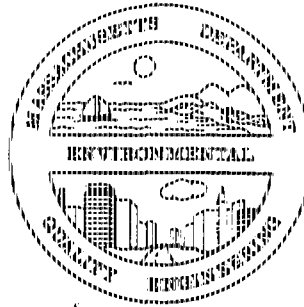


NEWS RELEASE

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*Special task force
appointed by Secretary
John Bewick of the
Executive Office of
Environmental Affairs*
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A special task force appointed by Secretary John Bewick of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and charged with coordinating the cleanup of New Bedford Harbor has proposed a comprehensive \$3.4 million budget designed to fully analyze the harbor's polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination problem and determine cleanup options. The study also includes a plan for monitoring the area during cleanup and post-cleanup effectiveness activities.

The detailed package involving both public and private agencies would document the effects of PCBs on human health, marine life, and the environment. It also provides for the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) to develop a cost-effective cleanup program for the harbor and sections of Buzzards Bay.

DEQE Commissioner Anthony D. Cortese, and New Bedford Rep. Roger R. Goyette, along with members of the Task Force are currently examining various funding sources for this part of the project.

"We're vigorously seeking finances for these studies, which are essential to the overall cleanup effort," Cortese said. "There are simply too many unanswered questions concerning the long-term effects of PCB contamination in that area. Also, with a project of this magnitude we want to avoid unnecessary expenditures by knowing up-front just how much dredging must be done."

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(QUOTE BY REP. GOYETTE)

According to a preliminary estimate by Malcolm Pirnie Inc., a private consulting firm, it would cost approximately \$130 million to remove 90% of the contaminated sediments from the harbor area. This estimate could be pared down if research results determine that a less ambitious dredging project would sufficiently clean the harbor.

One proposed study by the Wood's Hole Oceanographic Institute and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries would identify the extent of PCBs in the sediment. "This information would be the key to the actual cost of dredging the harbor," Cortese said.

These two agencies have also proposed to study shellfish and finfish to determine the degree of contamination, as well as analyze lobsters moved from contaminated waters to clean waters to examine the depuration process (when shellfish cleanse themselves of bacteria or any other toxic substance potentially harmful to humans). In addition, they want to test the harbor for heavy metal content, determine PCB levels in water and air samples, and define the water flow between the outer harbor and Buzzard's Bay.

The Department of Public Health hopes to document the long-term health effects on people who ate contaminated seafood years before PCBs were discovered. The agency wants to collect mortality data searching for cancer-related deaths, and compare the rate of miscarriages, neonatal deaths, congenital defects and birth weights between New Bedford and Fall River.

This package also outlined a proposed enforcement plan for the harbor area conducted by the Division of Law Enforcement, as well as the appointment of a local coordinator to work with the legislature, and city and state environmental groups.

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The special Task Force appointed in July, 1981, is headed by DEQE and includes representatives from the Division of Marine Fisheries, Department of Public Health, Executive Office of Coastal Zone Management, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Environmental Management, and the Wood's Hole Oceanographic Institute.

Portions of New Bedford Harbor have been closed to lobster and commercial fishing since 1977 after lobster and finfish samples showed PCBs in excess of F.D.A. standards. (PCBs are a mixture of synthetic organic chemicals, identified as a danger to human health, used in manufacturing electrical equipment.)

In 1981, DEQE nominated the harbor for the EPA's Superfund program which provides federal assistance for the cleanup of hazardous waste sites. "Though New Bedford Harbor has not received Superfund assistance to date, it is still a top-priority problem that must be resolved," Cortese said.